

Press release: EdTech Strategy marks 'new era' for schools

The use of technology in education will be transformed by a new Government strategy published today to reduce teacher workload, boost student outcomes and help level the playing field for those with special needs and disabilities.

Unveiling the Education Technology strategy at the Schools and Academies Show in London, the Education Secretary will set out plans – backed by £10 million – to support innovation and raise the bar in schools, colleges and universities across England.

Teachers, lecturers and education experts will unite with innovative businesses to harness the power of technology to tackle common challenges, and to ensure those working in education are equipped with the necessary skills and tools to meet the needs of schools, colleges, and their pupils.

EdTech exports are worth an estimated £170 million to the UK economy, and the strategy will deliver on the Government's ambition for tech firms to work with the education sector and create innovative solutions to 10 key education challenges, including:

- Reduce teachers' marking workload – using technology to cut the time teachers spend preparing and marking homework.
- Boost training opportunities for teachers – looking at how technology can make training more accessible and tailored to individual needs of teachers.
- Identify how anti-cheating software can be improved – setting out more detail on how the Government can help to tackle the problem of essay mills, particularly in universities.
- Promote the use of innovative tech to level the playing field for people with special educational needs and disabilities – identifying the technology that best suits individual needs.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds will say:

We are living in a digital world with technology transforming the way we live our lives – both at home and in the workplace. But we must never think about technology for its own sake. Technology is an enabler and an enhancer. For too long in education, technology has been seen as something that adds to a teacher's workload rather than helps to ease.

This strategy is just the first step in making sure the education sector is able to take advantage of all of the opportunities available through EdTech. We now call on schools, businesses and technology developers to realise the huge potential of technology

to transform our schools so that teachers have the time to focus on teaching, their own professional development, and – crucially – are able to cater to the needs of every single one of their pupils.

For some children, technology can have a profound effect in opening up channels of communication – making learning accessible in ways not possible without the intervention of technology. Technology has the power to bring children with certain special education needs new independence in learning and communicating.

So as part of the strategy, the Education Secretary will announce that leading assistive technology developers and education experts will make recommendations to the Government on ways to harness the power of technology to support learners with conditions such as dyslexia or autistic spectrum disorders to thrive in the classroom.

Overseeing work on the wider EdTech agenda, a new EdTech Leadership Group will be convened to bring together educators within industry and will report back by the end of the year. The Group will make commitments to determine future use of technology and practice throughout the education sector.

Government will also work in partnership with the UK's innovation foundation Nesta, to find technological solutions on essay marking, formative assessment, parental engagement and timetabling technology – four of the ten EdTech challenges set out in the plan.

The collaboration will stimulate industry interest, and support the development of products, to ensure that they meet the needs of teachers, lecturers, pupils and students.

Working with the British Education Suppliers Association (BESA), schools will also receive help to identify the right products when buying technology through LendED, a free service which enables schools to try educational software before they buy them.

This platform will help to ensure that schools and colleges are getting the best value from the hundreds of millions spent every year on digital technology, to ultimately improve student outcomes, reduce teacher workload and help schools save money.

Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Chris Skidmore said:

As the way we interact with technology is changing at an ever-increasing rate, it is more important than ever that the education system keeps pace with the change around us. We need to work with leading head teachers, education experts and tech companies to unlock the benefits for our children and young people.

The collaboration enabled by this strategy will provide an unprecedented boost to the role technology has to play in schools,

colleges and universities, and support the UK's dynamic EdTech sector to develop an ever-wider range of exciting products and technology solutions.

Drawing on existing expertise in the system, the strategy will also launch a series of 'demonstrator schools and colleges', which will showcase best practice and provide peer-to-peer support and training for teachers, lecturers and school leaders.

This will be supported by free online training courses for teachers and school leaders, produced by the Chartered College of Teaching, which will provide access to high-quality continued professional development and equip them with the knowledge required to make the best use of technology.

Head of Education Europe at Google Liz Sproat said:

The strategy published today takes an important stance in supporting schools, colleges and universities to invest in technology, not only for the benefit of educators, but for their students too.

From our work across Europe we are seeing how schools are embracing technology with impressive results. These positive developments come as a result of coupling technology with investment in professional growth, equipping educators with the knowledge they need to use technology effectively.

It is encouraging to see how the DfE is pledging to support schools, not just with investment, but guidance on infrastructure and teacher skills to assist them in taking full advantage of the exciting array of technologies on offer.

Director of Education at Nesta Joysy John said:

We welcome the launch of the Department for Education's new EdTech Strategy, which will bring much needed coordination to the field. Part of the Government's new EdTech Fund will be supported by Nesta to bring together schools and the tech industry, building an evidence base and supporting the EdTech products that really work.

Schools and colleges will be involved every step of the way in product development and implementation, and we believe this is a crucial step in creating a smarter system that benefits both teachers and students.

Director of Corporate Strategy at Ofsted, Chris Jones, said:

The Government's EdTech strategy highlights some exciting

opportunities for teachers to harness technology that allows them to dedicate their energies to the substance of education: effective teaching of the curriculum that produces great outcomes for pupils.

UK Director of Education for Microsoft, Chris Rothwell, said:

Technology is having incredible impact in all aspects of education today, but there is always more to be done. We welcome the announcement of an EdTech strategy for England, with its focus on building on existing best practice and lowering barriers to adoption for all.

The launch of the EdTech strategy is the latest step taken to reduce the burden on teachers and schools, including the launch of the Teacher Vacancy Service, which has now been rolled out nationwide. This will help schools bear down on the estimated £75m spent on recruitment advertising per year, providing a simple, free and easy-to-use platform for teachers to find their next career move.

The UK's innovative EdTech businesses are integral to the success of the strategy, and through the modern Industrial Strategy we are supporting these businesses to start, scale and grow, placing the UK at the forefront in the development and adoption of new technologies.

The new EdTech Strategy will go further by ensuring businesses are better equipped to develop products which meet the needs of educators, enabling them to build a robust evidence base to demonstrate the impact of their products; and driving demand for both innovative and proven products.